



Public Health

A PROSPECTIVE QUESTIONNAIRE BASED STUDY TO ACCESS FOOD HABITS, HEALTH AND HYGIENE AWARENESS AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN AGED 05 TO 15 YRS- SINGLE CENTRE STUDY

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**ABSTRACT** This study evaluated the awareness levels of school-going children aged 5 to 15 years regarding diet, exercise, food safety, menstrual hygiene, and cleanliness. Data were collected from a representative sample of 100 children through a structured questionnaire. Results indicated that awareness levels varied significantly across different domains, with high awareness in areas such as breakfast consumption and hand hygiene, but gaps in food safety and nutrition knowledge. These findings underline the need for targeted health education initiatives to address knowledge deficits and promote healthier lifestyle habits among children.

**KEYWORDS :** Hygiene, safety practices, awareness in school kids

**INTRODUCTION:**

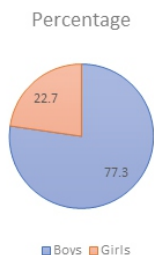
Health awareness in children is crucial for fostering long-term healthy behaviours. Schools provide an ideal setting to impart health education on key topics such as diet, exercise, food safety, and hygiene. This study aims to assess the awareness levels of children aged 5 to 15 years in these domains, identifying gaps that need attention to improve overall health outcomes.

**Methodology-**

**Study Design:** Prospective observational questionnaire-based study.

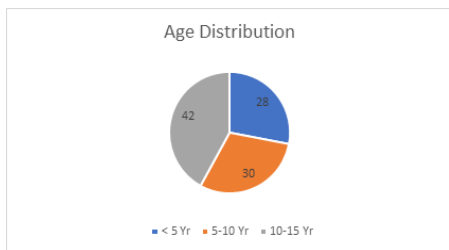
**Participants:** 100 school going children of age 5 to 15 years

**Profile:** 77.3% boys, 22.7% girls



**Fig 1:** Profile of participants

**Age Distribution:**



**Fig 2:** Age distribution of participants

**Family Income:**

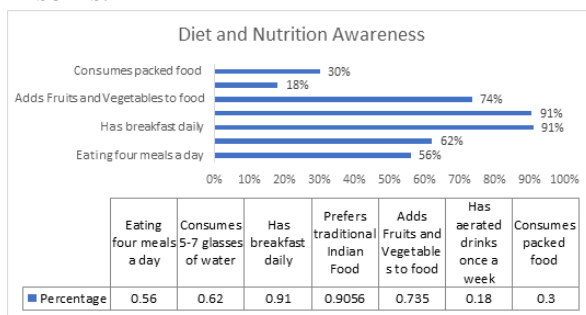
No. Income Percentage  
 1.<1 lakh 22.64  
 2.1-10 lakhs 15.09  
 3.>10 lakhs 62.26

**Table 1: Income group of participants**

No.	Income	Percentage
1.	<1 lakh	22.64
2.	1-10 lakhs	15.09
3.	>10 lakhs	62.26

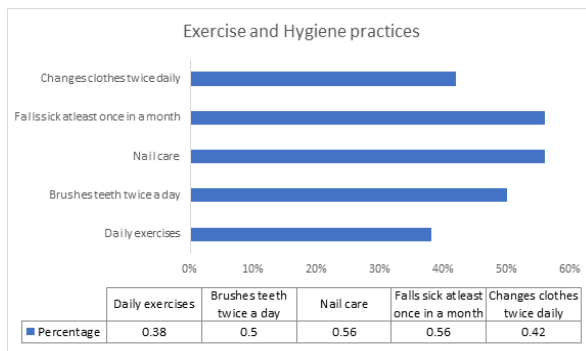
A structured questionnaire assessed children's knowledge and behaviors related to diet, exercise, food safety, menstrual hygiene, and cleanliness.

**RESULTS:**



**Fig 3:** Diet and Nutrition Awareness

In the Diet and Nutrition Awareness category, 56% of the children reported eating four meals a day. Regarding hydration, 62% of the children consumed 5-7 glasses of water daily, while 8% drank 8-10 glasses. A significant 91% of the children had breakfast daily, with 90.56% opting for traditional Indian foods as their preferred breakfast choice. Furthermore, 73.5% of the respondents regularly included fruits and vegetables in their diet. Sugary drinks were consumed less frequently, with only 18% reporting drinking soda or sugary beverages once a week. However, 30% of the children admitted to consuming processed or packet foods, such as chips and biscuits, on a daily basis, highlighting a potential area of concern for dietary habits.



**Fig 4:** Exercise and Hygiene practices

In terms of Exercise and Hygiene Practices, only 38% of the children reported exercising daily, indicating a need for more physical activity. Oral hygiene practices were relatively balanced, with 50% of the children brushing their teeth twice a day. Nail care was maintained by 56% of the respondents, who reported cutting and cleaning their nails once a week. Health-wise, 56% of the children had fallen sick at least once in the past month, while 42% reported changing their clothes twice a day.

When it came to Menstrual Hygiene and Puberty Awareness, 67% of girls aged 10-15 years were aware of menstrual hygiene practices, and the same percentage of children were knowledgeable about puberty, suggesting a moderate level of awareness on these critical topics.

Food Safety and Cleanliness Awareness was mixed, with 94% of the children washing their hands before meals and 96% after meals. However, only 46% washed fruits and vegetables before consumption. Half of the respondents could correctly identify how to tell if food was safe to eat, while 46% knew the correct action when encountering mouldy bread or roti. A mere 25% of the children were aware of how long perishable food items could be left at room temperature before becoming unsafe, and only 15% regularly checked expiration dates on food products. Positively, 86% understood that using a refrigerator is the safest way to store leftovers.



**Fig 5:** Food safety and cleanliness awareness

In terms of Kitchen Hygiene, 82% of the children reported helping their parents in the kitchen, though only 52% knew how often kitchen surfaces should be cleaned. Additionally, 46% understood the importance of regularly taking out the trash from the kitchen area, highlighting areas for further education regarding kitchen cleanliness.

## DISCUSSION:

The study revealed high awareness in some areas, such as daily breakfast habits (91%) and hand hygiene (94%), indicating that children are well-versed in basic healthy practices. However, awareness was lower in critical areas like food safety, with only 50% knowing how to assess the safety of food and 25% understanding the risks associated with leaving perishable foods out at room temperature. In nutritional Habits, while most children eat fruits and vegetables regularly, a concerning 30% consume processed packet foods daily, reflecting a need for more education on the risks of processed food consumption. Parental food habits and feeding strategies are the most dominant determinants of a child's eating behaviour and food choices. Parents should expose their offspring to a range of good food choices while acting as positive role models. Prevention programmes should be addressed to them, taking into account socioeconomic aspects and education.[1] In 31% of kids, there was an increase in consumption of processed foods such as chocolate, filled cookies, instant noodles, and canned foods in a study done in Brazil among school children which is comparable with our study. [2] Another study done by Lynn Roblin noticed 27% of calories of school kids came from snacks which is not a healthy practice resulting in childhood obesity. [3] In Exercise and Hygiene, only 38% of the children exercise daily, pointing to a gap in physical activity awareness. Additionally, although most children practice good hand hygiene, there is still room for improvement in areas like nail care and dental hygiene. This is comparable with study done by Apurva Mishra et al, wherein Children with uneducated parents have often experienced toothache, brushes once a daily and frequently visits the dentist for toothache compared to children of educated parents, and this association was observed to be statistically significant. [4] In Menstrual Hygiene, Awareness of menstrual hygiene and puberty was moderately high (67%) but could be improved with more focused education for older girls. Learning about menstrual hygiene and health is essential for adolescent girls' health education to continue working and maintaining hygienic habits. Infections of the reproductive system and their repercussions can be avoided with better awareness and safe menstruation practices.[5]

## CONCLUSION:

The study identifies key areas where school-going children exhibit strong health awareness, such as daily breakfast consumption and hand

washing, but also highlights significant gaps in food safety knowledge and physical activity habits. These findings suggest the need for comprehensive health education programs targeting dietary habits, food safety, and the importance of regular exercise. Schools should play a pivotal role in implementing these programs to ensure children develop healthy habits early in life.

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